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# 'Serious damage' seen for U.S. intelligence

By Michael J. Sniffen
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Former CIA agent Edward Lee Howard's defection caused "serious damage" to U.S. spying in the Soviet Union, the vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said yesterday.

"Whenever the KGB has had someone defect to the United States, it has caused damage to the Soviet Union, so it's only logical to assume that when we have a defector it damages the United States," said Sen. Patrick Leahy (D., Vt.).

"You just have to assume it's serious damage, but I don't think the extent of the damage will ever be made public. Nor should it be," he said.

"I would hope nobody in the administration or Congress spells out a long laundry list of exactly what this means," he added, because that could "confirm things the Soviets only suspect and tell them things they don't know."

Assistant FBI director William Baker yesterday declined to discuss the damage Howard had done, and CIA spokeswoman Kathy Pherson also would not comment on the Moscow report.

As one senior U.S. intelligence official put it: "Anything we say is just going to help Moscow, and we're not going to do that."

Last year, U.S. sources said the CIA had lost contact with a Soviet citizen in Moscow who had long provided valuable information about high-technology electronics and aviation research.

Other published reports suggested that Howard had known the method by which the CIA contacted this spy and others working for the United States inside the Soviet Union.

One published report said that after Howard's work for the Soviets became public, five U.S. intelligence officers in the Soviet Union had been caught by Soviet authorities while on spying errands and expelled from the country. Three expulsions of U.S. diplomats were publicly reported by the U.S. government during that period.

Leahy said yesterday that both the CIA and the FBI "realize there were problems in handling this case." He said steps have been taken by CIA director William J. Casey and FBI director William H. Webster "to correct them and not sweep them under the rug."

The government has acknowledged that a year after he left the CIA, still angry over his dismissal, Howard told former agency co-workers that he had contemplated entering the Soviet Embassy in Washington and telling what he knew. The FBI was not alerted for more than a year, though.

Leahy said he expected that the Soviets "will do a great deal to show him living well and to trumpet him. I expect to see him brought out a lot to make all kinds of statements. I caution you to take them with a grain of salt. They will try to make it a very big event to try to get others to defect."

The senator said the timing of the Soviet announcement about Howard might have been designed to deflect attention from the defection to the United States of two tightrope walkers with the Moscow Circus.

Leahy said there was no way to halt defections, but he said they might be limited if U.S. intelligence agencies would "do a better job of ongoing screening and ongoing checks of people with access to classified information."

Casey said recently that every U.S. intelligence agency was years behind schedule in reinvestigating its employees for security risks. A congressional source said that since the spate of spy cases last year, U.S. agencies were "giving greater emphasis to rechecking the employees they've already hired."

Asked about published reports that Howard "wiped out" the CIA's Moscow station, a senior U.S. intelligence official, requesting anonymity, replied: "Maybe it would be good for the Soviets to believe that."

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